

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8765

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 6137

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: KS, PFOR, PINT

SUBJECT: REACTIONS TO PRESIDENT PAK'S CHINHAE PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: SEOUL 6064 (DTG PR 050852Z AUG 76)

BEGIN SUMMARY. IN WAKE OF PRESIDENT PAK'S STATEMENT THAT NO SIGNIFICANT ANNOUNCEMENTS COULD BE EXPECTED FROM ROKG ON AUGUST 15, MANY OBSERVERS ARE CONCEDING THAT THEY NOW SEE LITTLE HOPE OF LIFTING OF EMERGENCY MEASURES OR ANY OTHER SUCH DOMESTIC STROKE TO LIGHTEN POLITICAL CONTROLS. NEVERTHELESS, RUMORS STILL PERSIST THAT SOME ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT EXTERNAL POLICIES MAY BE IN WIND. ACCORDING TO ONE USIS SOURCE, PAK MADE OFF-RECORD COMMENT THAT IF JIMMY CARTER WERE ELECTED AND BEGAN SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN US FORCES IN KOREA, ROKG WOULD COUNTER BY PLACING KOREAN GENERALS IN PRIMARY COMMAND OF FORCES. OPPOSITION NDP ACTING PRESIDENT SAW "NOTHING NEW" IN PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS BUT USED FORUM OF REPLY TO SUGGEST RE-E AMINATION OF ELECTION LAWS UNDER PRESENT YUSHIN CONSTITUTION. ALTHOUGH NUMBER APPEARS SPECULATIVE, GOSSIP COLUMNS CLAIM PRESIDENT SENT LETTERS TO SOME 15 OR 16 NRP NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMEN WARNING THEM TO IMPROVE THEIR CONDUCT, CONFIDENTIAL

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(PARA 6, REFTEL). PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT THAT SECRETARY'S

SEATTLE SPEECH WOULD PROBABLY RECEIVE NO FAVORABLE RESPONSE FROM COMMUNIST SIDE HAS RECEIVED LITTLE COMMENT HERE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN ACCORD WITH ITS GENERALLY LOW KEY TONE, PRESIDENT PAK'S CHINHAE PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH WAS REPORTED BY PRESS IN THEIR AUGUST 5 EDITIONS HAS NOT STIRRED UP MUCH POLITICAL COMMENT, AND WHAT REACTIONS THERE HAVE BEEN TO IT HAVE BEEN GENERALLY MILD. IT APPEARS PRESIDENT HAS DAMPENED PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT HE WOULD ANNOUNCE SOME CHANGE IN HIS DOMESTIC POLICIES ON AUGUST 15 ANNIVERSARY OF KOREAN INDEPENDENCE. PRIMIN CHIEF SECRETARY HAS IN FACT CONFIRMED TO CHARGE THAT AUG 15 STATEMENT WILL BE BLAND. MANY OBSERVERS CLAIM THAT THEY HAVE ALL BUT GIVEN UP HOPE OF ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THAT AREA ALTHOUGH NEWSMENT, LIKE KIM TONG-IK, MANAGING EDITOR OF CHUNGANG ILBO, WROTE (AND CONFIRMED WITH EMBOFF) THAT PAK STILL MIGHT ISSUE IMPORTANT INITIATIVE ON SOUTH/NORTH DIALOGUE OR UN MATTER. USIS SOURCES ALSO REPORT MUCH THE SAME CONJECTURE.

2. ONE USIS SOURCE NOTED THERE WAS AT LEAST ONE QUESTION NOT REPORTED BY MEDIA CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND ITS EFFECT ON UN COMMAND STRUCTURE. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, PAK PUT ANSWER "OFF RECORD", SAYING IN ESSENCE THAT IF JIMMY CARTER SHOULD WIN U.S. ELECTION AND BEGIN SIGNIFICANT REVISION IN US FORCE LEVELS, LEVELS, ROKG WOULD INSIST ON REVISED COMMAND STRUCTURE TO PLACE KOREAN GENERALS IN PRIMARY CONTROL.

3. NDP ACTING PRESIDENT YI CHUNG-HWAN COMMENTED THAT HE FOUND NOTHING NEW IN PRESS CONFERENCE. HE TOOK ISSUE ON ONE POINT HOWEVER, NOTING THAT WHILE PRESIDENT FORESAW NO NEED TO REVISE KOREAN ELECTION LAWS BEFORE UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN 1978 AND 1979, HE DISAGREED. YI SAID OPPOSITION QUESTIONED GOVERNMENT STACKED COMPOSITION OF CENTRAL ELECTION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, WHICH HAS MADE SEVERAL RECENT RULINGS WHICH HAVE PROVED DAMAGING TO ONE OR OTHER NDP FACTION. Y FURTHER POINTED OUT ABSENCE OF POLITICAL PARTY OBSERVERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF CANDIDATES THEMSELVES, BOTH AT POLLING PLACES AND WHERE BALLOTS ARE TABULATED. HE COMPLAINED THAT OVERALL NUMBER OF ELECTION

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SPEECHES PERMITTED BY LAW AT PRESENT WAS TOO FEW. IN MAKING ABOVE COMMENTS YI DID CONCEDE THAT HE AGREED WITH PRESIDENT ABOUT NDP INTERNAL DISPUTES TO EFFECT THAT NDP SHOULD CLEAN ITS OWN HOUSE, AND THAT NDP SHOULD PURSUE ITS OPPOSITION IN ACCORD WITH YUSHIN CONSTITUTION.

4 GOSSIP COLUMNISTS HAVE SPECULATED RATHER CONSISTENTLY THAT AT LEAST 15 OR 16 DRP AND YUCHONGHOE ASSEMBLYMEN

WERE ISSUED DETAILED LETTERS FROM PRESIDENT WARNING THEM OF DANGERS IN CONTINUING "IRREGULARITIES" IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES WHICH MAY INCLUDE ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION ETC. PRESIDENT HAD CONFIRMED IN PRESS CONFERENCE THAT WRITTEN WARNINGS WERE INDEED SENT OUT, BUT DID NOT SPECIFY NUMBER.

5. PRESS COMMENT ON INTERVIEW HAS ADDED LITTLE TO PRESIDENT'S TERSE COMMENTS ON SECRETARY'S SEATTLE SPEECH. PRESIDENT PAK INDICATED HE WAS NOT SANGUINE ABOUT RESPONSE FROM COMMUNIST SIDE. SOME OBSERVERS CLAIM THAT WHAT WAS PERHAPS MOST SIGNIFICANT WAS THAT HE SAID SO LITTLE ON SUBJECT.

6. COMMENT: GENERAL REACTION TO PRESS CONFERENCE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A SHRUG OF THE SHOULDERS. WHILE UPBEAT ON DEFENSE AND THE ECONOMY, PAK CLEARLY INTENDED TO DEFUSE THE GREAT VARIETY OF POLITICAL RUMORS AND SPECULATION WHICH IN THE MIDST OF THE CURRENT CALM WERE STEADILY GROWING PAK'S PUBLIC APPROACH FITS WITH ALL ELSE WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT HIS MOOD RECENTLY: THAT HE IS RELAXED AND CONFIDENT AND WOULD LIKE TO KEEP THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION JUST ABOUT THE WAY IT IS.

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